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Protracted conflicts in the GUAM area and their implications for international peace, security and development

Security Council
Seventieth year

Identical letters dated 16 October 2015 from the Permanent Representative of Georgia to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council

I have the honour to transmit herewith the statement of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Georgia, dated 7 October 2015, regarding the thirty-third round of the Geneva international discussions (see annex).

I should be grateful if you would have the present letter and its annex issued as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda item 35, and of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Kaha **Imnadze**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

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Annex to the identical letters dated 16 October 2015 from the Permanent Representative of Georgia to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council

Statement of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Georgia regarding the thirty-third round of the Geneva international discussions

Tbilisi, 7 October 2015

The thirty-third round of the Geneva international discussions was held on 7 October 2015. The participants in the discussions took part, in their individual capacity, in the two working groups, the first focusing on security and stability in the Russian-occupied Abkhazia and Tskhinvali regions of Georgia, and the other on issues related to the safe and dignified return of internally displaced persons and refugees to the places of their origin. The discussions were co-chaired by the representatives of the European Union, the United Nations and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, and attended by the participants from Georgia, the Russian Federation and the United States. The Head of the Provisional Administration of the former South Ossetian Autonomous District and the Chairman of the Government of the Autonomous Republic of Abkhazia, as well as representatives of the Sokhumi and Tskhinvali occupation regimes, took part in the discussions.

The discussions were conducted in a constructive manner. Despite a heated debate, the participants exhausted all agenda items in both working groups.

Within the first working group, the participants from Georgia reviewed the security situation in the occupied regions. They expressed concern over the relocation of the so-called "border signs" in the villages of Tseronisi, Tsitelubani, Orchosani and Tamarasheni in July and August 2015. It was underlined that the installation of barbed-wire fences and illegal detentions and kidnappings of civilians increasingly deteriorated the security and humanitarian situation for the local population.

The Georgian side particularly stressed the deployment of Russian railway troops in the Abkhazia region of Georgia under the pretext of restoring the railway line. Concern was expressed over the increasing number of illegal military drills in the vicinity of the Georgian State border and inside the occupied territories. It was noted that the signing of the additional documents in the military, economic and social spheres further to the so-called "integration treaties" clearly illustrated the process of creeping annexation from the Russian side. In this context, the Georgian participants once again underlined the necessity of a legally binding non-use-of-force commitment by Russia, as well as international security arrangements in the occupied territories.

Within the second working group, the need to ensure human rights in the occupied territories, the freedom of movement, the right to receive education in the native language, the return of the internally displaced persons and refugees, the protection of cultural heritage, issues related to the environment and the water and gas supply to the population were discussed.

Extensive discussion took place concerning the restrictions on education in the Georgian language in the occupied territories, with particular emphasis on the situation in the Gali district. Attention was focused on the transition to teaching in Russian instead of the Georgian language in the 2015/16 academic year. The Georgian participants and the co-moderators emphasized the necessity of ensuring the right to receive education in the native language.

Within the frame of the negotiations, the issues of cultural heritage and the environment, especially the protection of forests, from the perspective of joint measures were also discussed.

Despite the fact that some of the participants were not constructive on the issue of the return of the internally displaced persons and refugees to their places of origin in the Russian-occupied territories, discussions on the issue were held, during which the Georgian side stressed the necessity of the involvement of the international community in this direction. In addition, an information session was held on the topic "Cultural heritage protection: principles and practice". The expert from the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization introduced to the participants possibilities to protect cultural heritage during military operations, as well as in conflict-affected regions and the occupied territories.

The Georgian participants once again reaffirmed their readiness to continue constructive participation in the discussions and to take effective measures with a view to conducting humanitarian projects aimed at resolving the pressing needs of the local population.

The thirty-fourth round of the Geneva international discussions will be held on 8 and 9 December 2015.